

8.3 - THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS FROM SELECTED READINGS.

PLESSY V. FERGUSON (1896)

What was the Court to decide and what was the decision? How does this court case solidify the role of being black in America?

The Supreme Court was to decide the following question “is Louisiana’s law mandating racial segregation on its trains an unconstitutional infringement on both the privileges and immunities and the equal protection clauses of the 14th Amendment?” This means that Homer Plessy argued that the Louisiana Law went against the 14th Amendment and therefore was unconstitutional. The court upheld racial segregation by state laws as long as the separate facilities were equal. The consequence is that the Court case upheld legal racism and segregation allowing additional states to create laws forcing separate facilities for the two races.

RICHARD WRIGHT, *12 MILLION BLACK VOICES*

1. Do you think World War I had an influence on African Americans and their migration to the North? How? Why do you think the migration slowed dramatically after 1928?

WWI had an influence on the Great Migration because southern blacks sought to fill jobs led by those who were called to fight overseas. Many blacks may have volunteered to join the military to seek an education and equality. Increased production for more war materials in northern industries opened additional promises of employment. The stock market crash of 1928 and the “Great Depression” would have hindered migration due to the lack of work anywhere.

2. What does Richard Wright’s description tell you about the experience of moving from the South to the North? How do you think the African American migrants felt? What were some of the challenges in attempting to create a better life? What were some of the differences between southern and northern life?

Confusing, fear, anxiety, difference between the simple world of the South and the complexity of the North.

Challenges include: housing, overcoming the fears that exist, try to understand the “system”, fitting in, employment,

Northern life has a unique respect for the races, racism was not overt or obvious

3. What were working and living conditions like in the North? Did it appear to be a better life? How? How was the treatment of blacks in the North and South similar? How was it different?

They didn’t have houses to go to.

LANGSTON HUGHES, “MONTAGE OF A DREAM DEFERRED”

1. In the sixth line, whose feet do you think the author is talking about? What are they doing?

The feet references to “Dream Boogie” are the feet of African Americans beating to the rhythm of a questionable tune. From “Harlem” we feel the frustration of a dream deferred and the anger that may result.

2. What do the narrator’s inner feelings appear to be? What is his outward persona? What does the poem tell you about the life of the narrator?

The outward persona reflected in “Dream Boogie” is the stereotypical feeling that everything is okay and blacks are generally happy. However, the inner feelings guided by “Daddy” are that this stereotype should be challenged. Hughes may be angry himself at the state of civil equality freedom and from oppression

3. In “Harlem,” what are the essential two outcomes of a dream deferred? Which do you think unfolded? Do you think Langston Hughes had a feeling about the nature of the future?

The first obvious outcome of a dream deferred is that it could explode from the build-up anger and frustration that it has caused. The other possible essential outcome of a dream deferred is that it sags like a heavy load, always present and always nagging those that carry it. Hughes accurately identified that the built-up emotions were about to explode and that his poems were written on the verge of a large movement toward Civil Rights.

ANNE MOODY, COMING OF AGE IN MISSISSIPPI

1. How does this document exemplify the planning involved in the civil-rights movement?

This document explains how Rosa Parks started the civil rights movement when she refused to give up her seat to a white guy.

2. What did non-violent demonstrators have to endure? What qualities do you think the demonstrators had? Do you think they had any special skills or training? Who were the different people who sat at the counter? What do these facts tell you about the movement?

The demonstrators had to face beatings and even death. These demonstrators had to have incredible determination and honor.

3. Why do you think the police did not intervene? Do you think they had an obligation to do so? What does this tell you about the role of much of the local law enforcement during this time? Was this fair?

JOHN LEWIS, ORIGINAL TEXT OF SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED AT THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

1. What part of the speech do you think the other civil rights leaders wanted John Lewis to change? Why? Do you think it was a wise idea?

2. Why do you think John Lewis did not support the civil-rights bill? What issues did it not address? What examples does he use to make his point?

3. John Lewis asked, “I want to know, which side is the Federal Government on?” Which side do you think the government was on? Did it this change? Cite evidence to support your opinion.

MALCOLM X, “MESSAGE TO THE GRASS ROOTS”

1. What is the overall message delivered by Malcolm X?

2. Do you think Malcolm X makes a strong argument against the justification of violence against blacks? What examples does he cite?
3. How did Malcolm X attempt to unite African Americans in his speech?

MARTHA HONEY, LETTER FROM MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER

1. How does Martha Honey describe her experience as an activist? What is different about her experience compared to that of black activists?

She didn't think it was fair that she got breaks unlike the activists.

2. What does Honey's letter tell you about the state of Mississippi?
3. Is Honey proud of her contributions? Why, or why not?

TESTIMONY OF FANNIE LOU HAMER

1. What makes someone a first-class citizen? Why? What is so important about being able to vote?
2. What risks did African Americans face when attempting to register or after they registered?
3. Was Fannie Lou Hamer's arrest justifiable? What was the treatment of her like?

TESTIMONY OF RITA L. SCHWERNER

1. How were Rita Schwerner and her husband treated because they were white activists? Would you say they faced discrimination? Give examples.

The Schwerner's were treated more harshly than blacks and even black activists due to the fact that they were white.

2. According to Schwerner, how did police use fear and intimidation? What would you do if you were an activist facing these tactics?
3. Why did Schwerner go to see the governor? What was his response? Why do you think he responded the way he did?

ALICE WALKER, "ONCE"

1. Which section of the poem most struck a chord with you and why?

2. What did the poem tell you about African Americans' view of themselves?

SANDRA A. WEST, "RIOT! - A NEGRO RESIDENT'S STORY"

1. Why would African Americans riot and burn their own neighborhood? What was being expressed? Do you think rioters had a goal?

The root causes of a riot are the ones being expressed in the actions of rioters.

2. Why did families who were fearful not leave their neighborhood?

The common thread/enemy they all shared created a sense of support that existed compelling them to stay.

3. Do you think rioting was an effective form of protest? Why, or why not?

Rioting is counterproductive, destroying the neighborhood in which you live. However, it does effectively draw attention to the problem that exists. This attention may be negative and would, again ineffectively, not help.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?"

1. How does King describe black socio-economic conditions? How are conditions for blacks today similar to or different from King's description of black society in 1967?

2. What role does King's religious faith and his "audacious faith" play in his speech?

3. In 1967, King stated, "Now, when I say questioning the whole society, it means ultimately coming to see that the problem of racism, the problem of economic exploitation, and the problem of war are all tied together. These are the triple evils that are interrelated." Can you apply this statement to issues today? How?